

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN VIET NAM

SUBJ: ITALIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF VIET NAM

1. SUMMARY: VIET NAM COVERAGE IN ITALIAN PRESS HAS DOMINATED NEWS FOR PAST WEEK, EMPHASIZING COLLAPSE OF GVN FORCES, PLIGHT OF REFUGEES, AND AMERICAN EVACUATION ATTEMPTS. ULTIMATE LOSS OF SVN TO COMMUNISTS GENERALLY REGARDED AS INEVITABLE. MANY ALLEGATIONS OF PAST AMERICAN BLUNDERS, BUT CONSENSUS IS THAT US FOREIGN POLICY CAN RECOVER FROM SETBACK IF REASSESSMENT NOW UNDERWAY ESTABLISHES MORE REALISTIC PRIORITIES. HARSHTEST CRITICISMS OF US COME FROM CONSERVATIVES, WITH PREDICTABLE EXULTATIONS FROM FAR LEFT.

2. ITALIAN MEDIA REACTION TO VIET NAM HAS CENTERED ON STARTLING COLLAPSE OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES AND ALLEGED PAST AMERICAN MISTAKES OF BOTH CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION. PRECIPITATE ABANDONMENT OF TERRITORY BY GVN GENERALLY SEEN AS PRESAGING COMPLETE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER WHICH NOT EVEN EXTENSIVE AMERICAN AID COULD AVERT. US CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION AND PAST MISTAKES SEEN AS FACTORS BY MODERATE PRESS BUT MAJOR CAUSE FOR COLLAPSE SEEN AS ENDEMIC IN HISTORY AND NATURE OF VIETNAMESE CONFLICT. CHINA, RUSSIA, AND US SEEN AS REACTING WITH PRUDENCE, BUT HANOI SEVERELY CRITICIZED FOR MASSIVE VIOLATIONS OF PARIS PEACE ACCORDS, HARASSMENT OF REFUGEES. ONLY COMMUNIST PAESE SERA AND UNITA' AND FAR-LEFT MESSAGGERO  
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SEE CURRENT SITUATION AS CULMINATION OF "LONG AND HEROIC

STRUGGLES" OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. OTHER OBSERVERS ESCHEW SUCH ROMANTICISM.

3. HARSHTEST US CRITICS HAVE COME FROM CONSERVATIVE PRESS, ESPECIALLY IL TEMPO AND CENTRIST IL GIORNALE. FORMER SEES "CRISIS OF US LEADERSHIP" IN CURRENT SITUATION AND WARNS WEST "NOT TO DROP ITS GUARD." GIORNALE SEES "LONG SUCCESSION OF US BLUNDERS" AS RAISING GRAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT US WORLD RESPONSIBILITIES.

4. REACTION OF MODERATE PRESS PERHAPS BEST TYPIFIED BY DC ORGAN IL POPOLO'S GIANNI PASQUARELLI WHO OBSERVED: "NOT MUCH WAS DONE IN WASHINGTON TO DEVELOP A POLITICAL STRATEGY THAT WOULD OFFER A VALID ALTERNATIVE TO A KIND OF COMMUNISM WHICH IS ONLY NATIONALISM. WE CANNOT DENY THE NEGATIVE ROLE OF THE OPEN DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE CONGRESS; WE CANNOT UNDERESTIMATE THE CARELESSNESS WITH WHICH KISSINGER SIGNED THE PARIS AGREEMENTS TO SUPPORT NIXON IN HIS DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES; WE CANNOT UNDERESTIMATE THE EASE WITH WHICH COMMUNISTS THE WORLD OVER REJECT A TREATY... THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN CREDIBILITY IS THEREFORE RAISED, BUT CAN BE SOLVED NOW THAT THE CITIZENS OF AMERICA ARE TRYING TO GIVE A RESPONSIBLE AND UNBIASED ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF THEIR FUTURE FOREIGN POLICY."

5. ONLY PAESE SERA INTIMATES THAT US EVACUATION ATTEMPTS ARE SINISTER, FEARING "AN INCIDENT OF THE TONKIN GULF TYPE."

6. COMMENT: ABSENCE OF COMMENT THAT RELIABILITY OF US COMMITMENT SPECIFICALLY TO EUROPE HAS BEEN DAMAGED BY VIET NAM IS PERHAPS INDICATION OF WIDESPREAD EUROPEAN FEELING THAT US INVOLVEMENT IN VIET NAM WAS DETRACTION FROM MAIN BALL GAME, WHICH IN EUROPEAN VIEW CONTINUES TO BE EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST.BEAUDRY

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